United Nations A/56/PV.98

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-sixth session

98th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 1 May 2002, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 12 (*continued*)

Report of the Economic and Social Council

Draft resolution (A/56/L.76)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/56/L.76, entitled "Participation in the plenary meetings of the Meeting of the General Assembly devoted to information and communication technologies for development".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/56/L.76?

Draft resolution A/56/L.76 was adopted (resolution 56/281).

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 12.

Agenda item 17 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(g) Appointment of members of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/56/110)

The Acting President: As indicated in document A/56/110, in accordance with the procedures described in article 3, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, and having consulted the regional groups concerned, as well as through a consultation by secret ballot with the General Assembly, the President of the General Assembly requested China, Cuba, the Russian Federation, the United Republic of Tanzania and the United States of America to propose candidates.

As further indicated in document A/56/110, as a result of the consultations held in accordance with article 3, paragraph 2, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, including consultations with the President of the Economic and Social Council and with the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, the President of the General Assembly submits to the Assembly the candidatures of Mr. Even Francisco Fontaine Ortiz (Cuba), Mr. Tang Guangting (China), Mr. Victor Vislykh (Russian Federation), Ms. Deborah Wynes (United States of America) and Mr. Muhammad Yussuf (United Republic of Tanzania) for appointment as members of the Joint Inspection Unit for a five-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2003 and expiring on 31 December 2007.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to appoint those candidates?

It was so decided.

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The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of sub-item (g) of agenda item 17.

Agenda item 18 (*continued*)

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Report of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (A/56/894)

Draft resolution (A/56/894, para. 4)

Mr. Ovia (Papua New Guinea): I would like to make some general comments on the report of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, under agenda item 18.

The report in document A/56/894 contains a draft resolution on East Timor. In this regard, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the Special Committee of 24 for their support. For the information of the General Assembly, this draft resolution was initiated by the former Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea, Ambassador Peter Donigi.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our close neighbours, the Republic of Indonesia and the former administrating Power, Portugal, for their cooperation and understanding in agreeing to the text before us today. The text is a consensus one, and it is now the text of the Chairman of the Special Committee on Decolonization. We in the Assembly all look forward to the next stage that East Timor will embark on after today, and more formally on 20 May. After independence, we hope to welcome it into our midst as one of our very own — an equal and sovereign Member State.

The draft resolution is, in large part, procedural in nature, but I would like to point out a number of salient and substantive facts and implications as we, as an active member of the Committee of 24, see them. For my delegation, the draft resolution before us today sends a very clear signal about three very important aspects.

First of all, as all of the members of the Committee of 24 will agree, the draft resolution, after it has been adopted by the General Assembly today, will end the mandate of the Special Committee over one of the remaining 17 Non-Self Governing Territories. All of us in the Assembly are well aware that the Committee of 24 has been seized of this matter for at least the past two decades, if not longer, although in recent times the Security Council became seized of the matter and arranged for a Special Representative of the Secretary-General to administer the Territory. The Committee's mandate, however, was preserved, and it continued to receive petitions and to arrange participation by representatives of the Territory at its annual meetings and seminars.

Secondly, this draft resolution serves to send a very strong message to all administering Powers that there is a transparent process by which all Territories on the United Nations list under the Special Committee must be dealt with, and that no administering Power may pass its own legislation or do as it pleases with any Territory or group of Territories, whatever its physical size or population, political, economic, social and historical circumstances.

Thirdly, the transparent process involves the development of work programmes on a case-by-case basis for each Territory and involves the Committee in overseeing the proper administration of each Territory up to and including the date of its removal from the United Nations list.

Accordingly, although the draft resolution on East Timor appears to be procedural, it has substantive implications in respect of the mandate of the Special Committee. The implication is that the administering Power cannot bypass the Special Committee by transferring or attempting to deal with the Territory concerned without the involvement of the Committee. It also shows that the Committee is serious and has in place a transparent process for dealing with each Territory.

For these reasons, over the past several years Papua New Guinea has been advocating that a specific programme of work for each Territory be developed, in close collaboration and cooperation with the Committee of 24, the administering Powers and the peoples of the Territory. Such a programme of work

must take account of all of the issues and the circumstances pertaining to each of them.

In this regard, therefore, the Committee has mandated the delegations of Antigua and Barbuda and Papua New Guinea to lead informal discussions with the people of the Territories and the administering Powers to arrive at possible elements for work programmes for the small Territories in both the Caribbean and Pacific regions. The Papua New Guinea delegation, together with all interested delegations, has commenced discussions with the administering Powers in respect to developing work programmes for Tokelau Islands, American Samoa and Pitcairn Island in the Pacific region.

We had one such meeting with the Ulu O Tokelau — the head of Tokelau — the New Zealand Administrator and government officials last year. We are very grateful that Tokelau Islands and its administering Power, New Zealand, are moving in unison in this direction, and hopefully a work programme will be finalized very soon.

We also met with the Government of the United States last year and on 15 March this year, albeit at an informal level. The United States Administration has taken on board the draft work programme and will soon make suggestions to the Special Committee with regard to the Territory of American Samoa.

We have also made initial contact with the Government of the United Kingdom with regard to Pitcairn Island and are awaiting a response.

I would therefore like to conclude my remarks by calling once again on all administering Powers, especially the larger ones — the United States, the United Kingdom and France — to continue to cooperate fully with the Special Committee in all our endeavours to complete our work in this our second decade.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution entitled "Question of East Timor", which is contained in paragraph 4 of the report of the Special Committee.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 56/282).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 18?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 26 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children

The Acting President: Members will recall that in its resolution 55/276 of 22 June 2001, the General Assembly decided that three interactive round tables would be held during the special session of the General Assembly on children and that each round table should have two co-chairpersons, making a total of six co-chairpersons. The co-chairpersons shall be heads of State or Government and shall be selected from the five regional groups. The sixth co-chairperson, who shall be the head of State of the country of the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, will co-chair round table 3.

With regard to the sixth co-chairperson, I have been informed that the President of the Republic of Korea will not be able to attend the special session on children. In the light of this development, consultations were held with the chairmen of the regional groups regarding the replacement of the sixth co-chairperson.

I should like to inform members that it has been agreed that the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Nepal will be the replacement as the sixth co-chairperson to co-chair round table 3.

If there is no objection, may I take it that the General Assembly agrees that the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Nepal will be the replacement as the sixth co-chairperson to co-chair round table 3?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 26.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

Draft decision (A/56/L.77)

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider draft decision A/56/L.77.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Perfiliev (Director, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Affairs Division): In connection with draft decision A/56/L.77, I should like to inform members that this statement of programme budget implications is provided in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure, whereby draft resolutions involving expenditure should be accompanied by an estimate of expenditures prepared by the Secretary-General and provided the Fifth Committee has had an opportunity of stating the effect of the proposal upon the budget.

The adoption of draft decision A/56/L.77 would give rise to a requirement for expenditure in the amount of $328,100 in respect of the scheduling of meetings on the weekend of 14 and 15 September 2002. Additional appropriations to accommodate these expenditures will be reflected in the first performance report for the biennium 2002-2003 for inclusion in revised appropriations to be considered at the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

As the Fifth Committee is not currently in session, it is understood that approval of draft decision A/56/L.77 would imply a waiver of the requirement for the Fifth Committee to state its effect on the budget at this stage.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft decision A/56/L.77, entitled "General debate of the fifty-seventh regular session of the General Assembly".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft decision A/56/L.77?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Cuba, who wishes to make a statement in explanation of position on the draft decision just adopted.

Mr. Requeijo Gual (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to state that, although we have accepted this decision, we have serious concerns in that regard. We raised these concerns, which are shared by the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, at the Group's monthly meetings in March and April.

Unfortunately, the Group's concerns were not taken into account, or could not be taken into account, by the presidency of the Assembly in respect of the parameters for the General Assembly debate. We would have preferred that the general debate be held during the 10 customary days, regardless of the fact that we would be working on Saturday or Sunday, and we would have preferred also that there not be a time limit on statements. However, given that the time limit is a voluntary one, my delegation's understanding is that statements by the heads of State or heads of delegation participating in the debate will not be interrupted.

We also trust that this new decision will not set a precedent. Last year we were told that the arrangements that were made would naturally not set a precedent for this year; we fully understood that. However, this year, for the second time, we are being told that this decision does not set a precedent, when, in reality, it does.

That is explanation of position we wished to make in this respect.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 8.

The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.